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Documents about adult education in Latin America at the Survey and Analysis Center of the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. were reviewed to identify promising research directions. A theoretical framework for research should be developed and should include definitions of concepts and variables in different settings and identification of problem areas for study. A working relationship with persons in Latin America should be established and an inventory listing made of available materials. Other studies should include validation information on national reports; program descriptions; case studies of effective programs; descriptions of specific professional practices; needs, problems, and clientele toward whom programs are directed; needs not being met; comparative studies; approaches useful in other countries; contributions of adult education in preparing national development plans; characteristics of programs which are most effective; study of criterion measures; analysis of critical incidents; evaluation of return on investment; and user studies. The Adult Education Association could encourage research by making available suggestions for research, by providing opportunities for conferences, and possibly by helping to secure funding. (eb)

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PROMISING DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH REGARDING ADULT EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA

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Introductory Comments - During the past few years, the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. has been engaged in a project supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development, designed to collect data about adult education activities in Latin America and to maintain these in a Survey and Analysis Center. The resulting data can serve many purposes, including the development of a variety of research projects designed to identify more precisely ways in which organized programs of adult education can contribute most effectively to the preparation and achievement of national development plans in Latin America.

In mid-May the current holdings of the Survey and Analysis Center were reviewed for the purpose of identifying promising research directions. Staff associated with the Center were also interviewed to ascertain activities by which the data had been assembled and were being used, and to ascertain future plans for the Center, where this information was not in available Center reports. Although a great many documents relevant to adult education in Latin America have been collected and organized within the Center, very few have been research reports or have contained statistical data and detailed descriptions of adult education programs.

The purpose of this statement is to present one researcher's ideas,

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regarding research related to the purpose, holdings, and activities of the Center, that might contribute most to the achievement of the broad purposes of the Center. Each suggested direction is presented as an initial idea for a research project that might encourage a researcher to prepare a detailed research proposal. Although the order in which ideas are listed suggest a general sequence in which the results of early projects would contribute to the design of projects further down the list, the list is not intended as a grand strategy. Such a general plan would require detailed exploration of desirable interrelationships between projects and would better emerge from collaboration between researchers who are interested in obtaining tested knowledge related to Adult Education in Latin America.

The process of development of detailed research plans will require special attention to both definitions and value judgments, as ways to develop a theoretical framework within which to conduct research. Detailed operation definitions of major concepts and variables is necessary because so many concepts in the fields of adult education throughout the Americas have meanings that are imprecise and varying from one situation to another. For example, the concept adult education is used in some settings to mean the part time and remedial equivalent of full time preparatory education, and in other settings is used to exclude this remedial function and to concentrate upon educational programs especially for adults. In some settings, the concept adult education is used to cover the entire range of ways in which adults beyond full time schooling alter their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a systematic and sustained way, while in other settings such activities as community development or management development

are viewed as outside the field of adult education. The way in which this concept is defined will have implications for both research and professional practice. To the extent to which adult education is defined to include activities beyond a part time equivalent of preparatory education, it would seem to require separate attention as part of national development plans. In the development of a theoretical framework for research, attention to value judgments is necessary because so many of the questions that have been posed in the past involve priorities and what should occur. For this reason, it will be important to emphasize the primary contributions of research in better understanding a problem area in which decisions are required, and in ascertaining the relative effectiveness of alternative ways of accomplishing an objective.

1. Inventory of Documentation - The Current survey has accumulated a variety of documents related to adult education in Latin America. Very few are in the form of statistical reports, official summaries, census summaries and related documentation. Because there is a substantial variation between countries in the type and amount of relevant data that is collected, and the type of reporting agency and reporting method, the location of existing documentation regarding adult education programs and participants requires a great deal of careful searching and familiarity with each country. A long term project might be conducted to establish contact with persons in most of the major adult education programs in Latin America, for the long range purpose of encouraging them to collect and report comparable data that is detailed and pertinent to

adult education programs and participants. In the short term, a relatively comprehensive inventory might be prepared and periodically revised, which would list available documents regarding adult education in Latin America, both those available in each of the separate countries and those that are located in international agencies and in the United States. The inventory listing for each item would include a copy of the item at the Center wherever possible. The purposes of the inventory would include documentation of trends, data for administrative decision making, stimulus for research, and encouragement of more useful reporting procedures. The types of documents that would be especially sought include broad international or national census-type reports that include variables directly relevant to adult education, reports from special studies related to manpower development, series of reports prepared by a type of agency (all public schools in a province or all churches in a denomination) or by a single agency that provide periodic information collected in the same form dealing with such topics as enrollments of adults of various characteristics by subject matter areas, reports from analysis of the clientele of an agency or program, reports from other special research studies related to adult education, and articles describing ongoing programs. The major task in assembling this inventory and related collection would be the establishment of a working relationship between A.E.A. and persons in the Latin American countries who would notify A.E.A. of the existence of relevant documents and would

arrange to have a copy sent. In the early stage, this would probably require periodic visits in each country by someone who would seek out relevant documents and establish the initial working relationship. The availability of the resulting inventory and related collection would become an important resource for the initiation of many of the remaining projects that are suggested in this report. A review of the inventory and collection could help the interested researcher to decide on the specific topic focus for a research proposal, plan data collection procedures, formulate a rationale, select control variables and to decide on the countries and /or types of agencies to include in a specific study. This project is in large part underway as a result of the current activities of the Center. The proposed project would be mainly an extension of current efforts, conducted in such a way as to collect more information in more countries over a longer period of time in a way that encourages more useful reporting procedures.

2. Validation - For many reasons, national reports regarding adult education do not accurately describe the actual numbers and types of programs. The current activities of the Center will provide a basis for indicating the points at which the discrepancy between the reports and the actual programs appear the greatest. A project might be undertaken to specify for a representative sample of adult education programs in Latin America, the congruency between the reports and the actual programs. The results might enable

persons interested in adult education to decide on the extent to which confidence may be placed in various types of information. The validation information might be collected by selecting representative types of reports from representative countries and then having someone visit with persons who are currently directly connected with the programs that are described in some way by the reports. The visitor would obtain from observation, interview, and agency records, data that would be comparable to that in the published reports. He would then compare the two, to establish the extent of congruency. The result would allow researchers who consulted the A.E.A. documents to know the types and extent of variations that tend to occur for each type of country and program and reporting service, between what is reported and what appears to be actual practice.

3. Program Descriptions - The design of experimental and theory based research is greatly facilitated by the availability of more detailed and accurate descriptions of existing adult education programs. The purpose of this project would be to accumulate comparable descriptions of a representative selection of programs from various countries. Efforts would be made to sample countries and types of programs so that the set of descriptions would be representative of all adult education programs in Latin America. Where individual Countries were similar in national characteristics and in type and extent of adult education, they would be grouped together and programs to be described would be selected ~~by~~ from the group instead of

country by country. Within countries or groups of countries, programs would be classified by type of agency sponsorship, occupational characteristics of the clientele, subject matter focus, and general format and method for learning and instruction. A number of programs would then be randomly selected from the total number in each cell in the stratified scheme. Each description would be either abstracted from more detailed authoritative published descriptions or would be prepared for the purposes of the project by someone associated with the program. The descriptions would include reference to objectives, selection and organization of learning experiences, evaluation activities, judgments regarding effectiveness, agency sponsorship, staffing, finance, clientele, and community setting.

4. Case Studies - Much can be learned from careful study of especially effective or innovative programs. Once such programs are identified, detailed case studies can be prepared that not only analyze in detail the current characteristics of the program but also attempt to reconstruct the process by which it was developed. Special attention would be given to situational facilitators and barriers, and the strategies that were used to achieve the innovation or effectiveness. For instance, a researcher might become aware of a case in which a chronic shortage of engineering aids in Argentina was recently solved through an adult education program aimed at young semi skilled workers in the industries in which the skilled technicians were needed. The researcher might then team up with a counterpart in Argentina and together prepare a case study. A major section of

the case study report might be a detailed description, as of the current time or height of the program, of sponsorship, objectives, learning activities, evaluation, staff, clientele, finance, and community setting. Another section would attempt to reconstruct why and how the program was established and developed with emphasis on influences on the development of the program and the roles of leadership by persons associated with the program. A third section would explore the benefit and impact of the program on the community.

5. Professional Practices - Persons engaged in the field of adult education must typically accomplish some comparable tasks such as need assessment, selection of methods of learning and instruction, and supervision of staff, but usually may do so in any one or combination of ways. This project would concentrate on obtaining detailed and analytical descriptions of specific professional practices, within various types of programs. Special emphasis would be placed on judgments regarding effectiveness of the practices. For instance, a researcher might interview adult education administrators connected with several different types of agencies regarding the practices that are used by themselves, their program administrators and the teachers of adults who work with them to be able to make judgements regarding program effectiveness based on evidence (evaluation). The interviews would deal with both descriptions of what was done by various practices, for given purposes, under given conditions. The results of such a preliminary study would provide the basis for the design of more tightly controlled experimental study.

persons and an assessment of the seeming effectiveness of various

6. Present Objectives - In almost every country, existing programs are directed towards only a portion of the people and problems towards which they might be directed. The purpose of this project would be to specify in detail the needs, problems, and clientele towards which existing programs are directed. Estimates would be made regarding the types of adults and problem areas that are being reached and served at a relatively satisfactory level, those that are being served partially, and those that are not being served by existing programs. This project would begin with existing programs to identify those segments of the population and those areas of life to which they relate. In effect, this would be an attempt to accumulate agency by agency some of the types of information regarding the segments of the adult population that are being served and what they study that is available from a project such as Johnstone's Volunteers for Learning. The resulting data would be compared with census-type data to identify gaps. Unserved groups or life roles would not necessarily be evidence of gaps in needed programs. It would be possible that segments of the population and topics related to life roles, that are not being served by existing programs are being served in other ways or are not in need of adult education programs. The decision regarding need requires a value judgment regarding the relative importance of having certain adults substantially change their competence in a given area.

7. Unmet Needs - In contrast to the previous project idea in which the focus was on the targets of existing programs, the present project

idea would concentrate on the needs for adult education that are not being met, or only partially so, by existing programs. Whereas the previous project would begin with the existing programs, this project would begin with the most urgent personal, community, and national problems, and then attempt to identify the gap between presently available adult education programs and the amount and type of programming that would be optimal. Information regarding needs would be collected from both surveys of the general adult population and from interviews with leaders from government, formal education, business, churches, and community organizations. The most urgent community problems would by this process be identified. The data from the adult population would indicate present levels of competence, educative activity, and awareness of opportunities to increase competence. The data from leaders outside adult education would indicate desired levels of competence to help resolve the community problem. The data from adult educators might include both present and desired levels of competence, along with information on existing programs. Together these data would indicate the types and amounts of additional adult education programs that seem to be required.

8. Comparative Study - The adoption by a county of practices from other countries, related to adult education, will be facilitated by comparative studies. This flow of adoption would be expected to move both to and from the United States. Because of the great number of potential variables that might be incorporated in comparative studies it is important that such studies be developed within a conceptual framework. The purpose of a comparative study would be to identify

those structural characteristics and dynamics of adult education programs that are most common to differing national settings and those that appear to be unique to specific settings. For instance, a close connection between basic literacy education and vocational education and community development may be characteristic of the less technologically advanced nations, whereas in the more industrialized nations with populations having higher levels of formal education it may be more widespread and effective to have each of these emphases central in a separate program. The findings should facilitate the extent to which adult educators in one country can profit from the experience of adult educators in other countries.

9. Diffusion of Practices - It would be anticipated that effective approaches to adult education that are being used extensively in one country might be little used in other countries in which they might be appropriate. A project might be designed to identify effective approaches that would appear to be useful in other national settings, and to study their relative effectiveness in these new national settings. In one country,the use of long term residential management development conferences for middle management personnel from business, industry, government, and education as a way of helping to prepare more broadly gauged executives, may be widespread and seemingly effective. If in a second comparable country this approach is not being used, a project might examine the practice in the first country, explore the need and appropriateness in the second country, and if it would seem to be needed and appropriate to introduce the approach in several ways, in several settings

within the second country and to carefully evaluate the impact. The theory and research on diffusion and adoption of practices provides a basis for designing this type of project. It would be important to examine not only the rate of adoption by various segments of the field of adult education, but also the follow through after initial adoption, along with the general question of effectiveness.

10. National Development Plans - The focus on adult education tends to occur after national development plans are prepared, as a way of achieving the objectives of the finished plan. It would seem reasonable to also focus on the contribution of adult education activities in the process of preparing the plan. A project could be prepared to study the contribution of an adult education approach to the preparation of a plan, compared with approaches that do not include an adult education component. Such a project might include the organization of high level seminars for persons with leadership responsibility connected with all segments of the community, which would be organized in communities throughout the nation. In addition to the benefit of the seminars to the participants, position papers or consensus reports would be prepared in a way similar to the procedures used in the U.S. by the League of Woment Voters. A somewhat different type of discussion group might be organized for a broad cross section of adult neighborhoods throughout the nation, that included consensus such as great decisions programs. In both instances the focus of the educational program would be on national development, what it is, present assets and liabilities of the country, high priority goals, and ways to achieve progress.

These programs would be evaluated in terms of what the participants learned, the quality of their consensus and recommendations regarding national development, the character of the national development plans compared to those developed in other similar countries but without the heavy adult education component at the planning stage, and the support for achieving the national development plans once they are adopted.

11. Comparative Program Effectiveness - The purpose of this project would be to identify characteristics of adult education programs that most differentiate the highly effective from the least effective programs. It would be necessary to restrict the study to programs of one type in one country, although the study could be repeated several times using different types of programs and different countries. Three representative samples of programs would be selected on the basis of the consensus of adult educators in the country who are familiar with the programs, regarding relative excellence of the programs of the selected type. The three samples would be selected from those which were nominated as most effective, least effective, and average. The same data would be collected from programs in all three categories, in an effort to identify methods, procedures, administrative practices and promotional efforts that most differentiate the most from the least effective. Some examples of the variables that might be included are the types and variety of learning methods that are used; procedures for recruiting and selecting learners; procedures for selecting and supervising teachers; ways

in which potential participants are informed about available programs; the proportion of program costs that are paid by learner, tax funds, learner's employer, and other sources; and a variety of administrative practices.

12. Criterion Measures - Criteria such as use, cost, or feasibility are central in the decision making process in each adult education program but are also relevant to all types of programs. The feasibility criteria would deal with the availability of time and resources needed to operate a proposed program. The cost criteria would consist of a comparison between program costs and the cost of achieving the program objectives by other means. The use criteria deals with the extent to which the results of the educational program, in terms of competence of learners, will be applied in practice within a given time period. In addition these criteria are used to decide whether an adult education program is more or less appropriate than a preparatory education or an action program to achieve a given objective. A project could be designed to ascertain the ways in which these types of criteria are being measured in practice and to compare the use of criterion measures in adult education programs with their use in other ways to achieve the same objectives. It is important to include in the set of criterion measures, both those related to learning gain by the participant and those related to the contribution that the learner with greater competence makes to his community and nation. It is within the latter category that the contribution of adult education to human

resource development becomes most apparent. As these measures become more precise it becomes more feasible to answer the question, given certain goals regarding national human resources, what portion of the investment should be placed in adult education?

13. Decision Making - The process of decision making regarding the contribution of adult education to the achievement of objectives related to manpower development, includes many critical incidents. A project could be designed to identify these critical incidents, to enumerate for each a list of alternative solutions, and to compare the relative effectiveness of the alternative solutions. The purpose of the critical incident analysis would be to identify effective strategies for certain major and recurring decision making problems. Persons who were directly connected with the incident, such as the decision to add or drop a major agency program, would be involved in the preparation of a detailed description of the major circumstances surrounding the decision, the key variables, and the major influences on the decision. By this means alternative solutions for each type of problem might be identified and their relative effectiveness tested in a more experimental way.

14. Evaluation Research - For instances in which an adult education component is included within national plans for manpower development, it is possible to study the return on investment in adult education programs. This project would be an experimental study. Similar communities or neighborhoods would be randomly assigned to experimental and control treatments. The experimental treatments would consist

of varying approaches to adult education as a means of achieving manpower development objectives. It would be necessary to specify several common manpower development objectives, such as technician training related to medicine or management development. One approach might be an emphasis on self study, another on community development, a third on group discussion, and a fourth on lectures and supervision of field experience conducted by experts. A conceptual framework would be necessary as a basis for deciding upon independent, dependent, and control variables. The combination of the criterion measures use and cost would serve as the dependent variable. The independent variables would be factors that would be expected to influence use and cost, and might include quality of staff, selection of learning experiences, and feedback to the learner. The control variables would be those that if not controlled might obscure the extent to which the independent variables did influence the dependent variable. Some of the experimental treatments might be ways other than adult education that might be used to achieve the objectives. These ways might include recruitment of trained personnel from other countries, or increased emphasis on preparatory education for youth who some years later would be able to do the needed work. One way in which an experimental study might be designed is to compare the required investment needed to achieve an objective using adult education with other approaches.

15. User Study - During the next few years the Center will probably become a major source of information on documents related to adult

education. A study could be designed to keep a careful record of the use of the Center holdings, in terms of who used the materials, how they did so, the aggregate amount of use, and unfulfilled requests.

Concluding Comment

As was mentioned in the introduction of this report, the foregoing suggested directions were prepared to encourage someone to conduct some research. This concluding comment will briefly indicate who might do so and what A.E.A. might do to encourage this. Clearly a primary source is university professors and their graduate students. The point to emphasize, however, is that along with researchers associated with the field of adult education, important contributions can be made by researchers from the social and behavioral sciences such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, social psychology, economics, political science, and geography. Many research teams will be strengthened by members from both the United States and at least one Latin American country. A.I.D. may also undertake to conduct or sponsor research projects related to adult education.

The Adult Education Association can encourage research projects such as those suggested in this report by familiarizing them with the holdings of the Center, by distributing this type of list of research ideas, by providing opportunities for persons who might become associated with this type of research activity to spend some time visiting another program or activity, by inviting potential researchers to a meeting to discuss their relevant research interests, and by inviting competent researchers to prepare a proposal for a related research project for which A.E.A. and/or A.I.D. might help to secure funding. The next step to be

taken by A.E.A. might be the organization of a small invitational conference to which might be invited those researchers who have the greatest liklihood of conducting future research related to adult education in Latin America. Part of the planning for this conference would be the preparation of prior reading materials. It would be anticipated that the major result of such a conference would be the stimulation of specific relevant research projects by some of these researchers.

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